

Stone Bridge Area Improvement Task Force Status Report

We have accomplished quite a bit since we last met with the Town Council a year or so ago. During the past year, we had been meeting every couple of months, as there was not much for us to do since the engineering firm was under way and the Town Administrator had been overseeing the engineering study of the bridge abutment.

We have had membership changes over the past year due to time conflicts. The last chair, Susan Rodrigues, had to resign due to time pressures with her new job, and I was elected chair in her place. As you may know, the Stone Bridge Area Improvement Task Force was created in 2003 by the Town Council with representatives from the town commissions and groups who have an interest in the Stone Bridge area. This includes the Open Space Commission, Harbor Commission, Tree Commission, Conservation Commission, Tiverton Garden Club, Economic Development Commission, Recreation Commission, an Area Resident and Area Merchant. We had been trying to get the Recreation Commission to our meetings since we started without success, but I am happy to say that Jack Cook has now been present at our 2006 meetings as their representative. We are also contacting a new Area Merchant representative.

The engineering study has been completed and VHB, the engineering firm, has proposed a plan for the restoration of the stone bridge area which you see before you. Bill DeSantis, VHB Project Manager, came to our October meeting and went over the plan with us. If you read our minutes from that meeting, we had a lot of discussion concerning the parking area, and since then, the Harbor Commission has expressed other concerns that have been subsequently relayed to VHB.

Unfortunately, VHB is on hold right now pending further funding, and cannot take our concerns for this plan into consideration. This is why we have now come to you.

We would like to solicit funding from the general public and have created this brochure as a means of explaining the project. This shows what we are trying to achieve, why we need the money to complete it and how much it will cost which is an estimated \$2-3 million, as well as what funds we currently have, which is about \$460, 000. In parallel, the Task Force is still working on a resubmittal of the FEMA grant, as well as looking into other grants. As we all know, some grants require matching funds, and that is another reason why we need this brochure to solicit funds from the public.

This is a draft of what it could look like; we have lined up a local graphic designer who will better develop it – at a low cost since she is a Stone Bridge area resident who believes in this cause.

We are seeking your approval to go ahead with setting up a Stone Bridge Restoration Fund through the town treasurer's office, so we can get funding to get VHB going again. In light of this, we would like to set up a public hearing to get the public's comments to this first proposal by VHB, so that when VHB does get funded again, they can incorporate both our comments and those of the general public at the same time. (We engineers don't like to redesign too many times!) It would be nice to have the Fund and brochure set in place for this meeting, in case we get an enthusiastic audience and they want to donate!

Thank You.

Dr. Susan E. Anderson, Chair